

RAS 31

Ymchwiliad i ffoaduriaid a cheiswyr lloches yng Nghymru

Inquiry into refugees and asylum seekers in Wales

Ymateb gan: Cymorth i Ffoaduriaid y Gelli, Aberhonddu a Thalgarth

Response from: Hay Brecon and Talgarth Refugee Support

I am chair of Hay Brecon and Talgarth Refugee Support, a purely civil group, with around 400 people on our database and many more supporters in our vilage and town communities.

We don't have any refugees in our immediate area and have been working with ShareTAWE and Unity in Diversity in Swansea. However in July this year we had around 30 Syrian refugees resettled in Ystradgynlais. Some of our supporters live in or nearby to Ystrad. But the resettling organisation went to great lengths to keep them from meeting and welcoming these people to their strange new homeland.

Some of our group members offered English Language Conversation classes but we were not allowed to contact the newly resettled refugees, who had to wait for 2 months before term-time began and formal ESOL lessons began. There was no consideration for the fact that these people needed and wanted English classes immediately. We eventually made contact, not thanks to the statutory or voluntary services, and our newly-settled refugees were delighted to interact with us, on all levels. There was then further problems, when the "professionals" informed volunteers that their services were not wanted....these volunteers were offering friendship and a welcome in their English conversation groups...which the "professionals", voluntary and Statutory, had no right to usurp.

It would appear that the paid workers of the voluntary and statutory sector deemed volunteers as intruders on their professional arena.

Regards

Sean O'Donoghue